

THE CLEARING CONNECTION

Clearing 2025 report.

What students did, wanted and decided.

CONTENTS

03 What's In This Report

05 Executive Summary

10 Our Five
Student Personas

17 Tariff groups

28 Evidence Deep-dive:
Clearing Research

33 Evidence Deep-dive:
Decision Making

40 Evidence Deep-dive:
Messaging

44 Evidence Deep-dive:
Channel Mix

49 Re-cap &
Next Steps

A DIFFERENT LENS ON CLEARING IN 2026

This report gives you the student view of Clearing, revealing how applicants prepared, what shaped their decisions, and what worked well.

Our report goes further to understand the **needs**, **considerations**, **emotions** and **behaviours** of Clearing students.

Through our **five student personas** and a further lens of **tariff groups**, it uncovers differentiating insights that challenge assumptions - from who exactly goes through Clearing, to how the journey makes them feel.

It will help you provide the right support, in the right way, at the right time — **differentiating your institution** and building early, strong connections with applicants.



HOW WE GATHERED THE INSIGHTS



4,808

Completed responses.

**STUDENTS FROM OVER
200 INSTITUTIONS**

All Clearing students invited.

5

Student personas.

**PROSPECTIVE
UNDERGRADUATES,
2025 ENTRY,
PLACED IN CLEARING**

**WEIGHTED TO BE
REPRESENTATIVE**

Of the Clearing population.

**FIELDWORK:
15 JUL - 22 OCT 2025**

Shortly after students confirmed their place.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Your student experience should reflect the reality of Clearing.
Many start preparing early and research with intent.



OVERALL STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY: GET YOUR TIMING RIGHT



Clearing isn't a last-minute scramble. Students start thinking about it earlier in the year.

92%

looked for information
before Results Day.

80%

had already researched available places
and knew who they wanted to contact.

64%

had started researching the university or college
where they were eventually placed *before*
August.

WHAT THIS
MEANS FOR
YOUR CLEARING
STRATEGY

You should have a continuous, visible, year-round presence.



OVERALL STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY: TAILOR MESSAGING

There is no one single Clearing journey and no 'one size fits all' message. A range of students with **different needs** go through the process, arriving via **different routes** with **different motivations** and **different expectations**.

- Some prioritise **quality of staff/teaching**
- Others are focused on their **likelihood of being accepted**
- For some, **teaching facilities** are a deciding factor

63%

Of the no offers persona thought **quality of staff/ teaching** was very important to their Clearing decision.

55%

of the disappointed on results day persona said the **chance of getting accepted based on their grades** was very important to their Clearing decision.

51%

of 'better than expected' persona said the **quality of teaching facilities** at the uni was very important in their Clearing decision.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR CLEARING STRATEGY

Generic messaging will underperform. To cut through, make sure your Clearing messaging is built on proof points relevant to the different student personas — and your own institution tariff.



OVERALL STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY: **COMMUNICATE QUALITY**

Decision-making is **about quality, not just availability**.
Students no longer see Clearing as 'settling'. They make
considered choices about fit, quality and outcomes.

Across Clearing decisions are shaped by:

- **Confidence** in the course and teaching quality.
- **Clarity** on what will be studied and how.
- **Reassurance** around acceptance and next steps.

92%

said quality of staff / teaching was
important when choosing their place.

91%

said quality of teaching facilities was
important when choosing their place.

84%

said the range of modules covered by a course
was important when choosing their place.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR CLEARING STRATEGY

If your quality signals are unclear, no amount of availability messaging will compensate. You must prioritise what students prioritise — lead with quality teaching, facilities and course content, communicate academic and student experience, and make the process easy.

OVERALL STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY: BE VISIBLE WHERE IT MATTERS



The Clearing experience works well for many students — but they are still reporting gaps in clarity, communication and visibility.

There's an opportunity to:

- Stand out with **timely, helpful marketing**.
- **Signpost students** to the information they value most.
- **Reinforce reassurance** at moments of uncertainty.

74%

said it was easy to find a course.

88%

had a positive experience contacting universities or colleges.

BUT

15%

still felt there could be more clarity on things like academic and financial support, accommodation, entry requirements, course details, practical logistics and funding.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR CLEARING STRATEGY

Outreach and marketing is under-utilised. Use advertising and social media alongside trusted research sources to maintain a presence, articulate relevant support messages, and reduce anxiety across the Clearing process.



OUR FIVE STUDENT PERSONAS

Giving you a detailed picture of who enters clearing.



A NUANCED PICTURE OF WHO ENTERS CLEARING



Direct

Those who didn't apply before the original application deadline, and have gone directly to Clearing.

29%

Traditional

Students who didn't get the grades needed to meet their offer conditions.

23%

Mind Changers

Students with offers who've decided they'd rather study something, or somewhere, else (they use 'Decline My Place').

20%

No Offers

Students who didn't hold any offers before Level 3 Results day.

14%

Better Than Expected

Students with offers who get better grades than expected, looking for a different university or college, or course (using 'Decline My Place').

13%

TRADITIONAL

Those who didn't get their grades to meet their offer conditions.

WHEN THEY RESEARCH

Many anticipate a problem with their grades and first think about Clearing in August.

47% wait until they know their grades before starting their journey — but act quickly on Results Day itself.

PREFERRED CHANNELS

- University or college websites, and UCAS website.
- Their phone.

WHAT THEY WANT

- Immediate reassurance.
- Clear process information ("what's the next step?").
- Clarity on key concerns like accommodation.

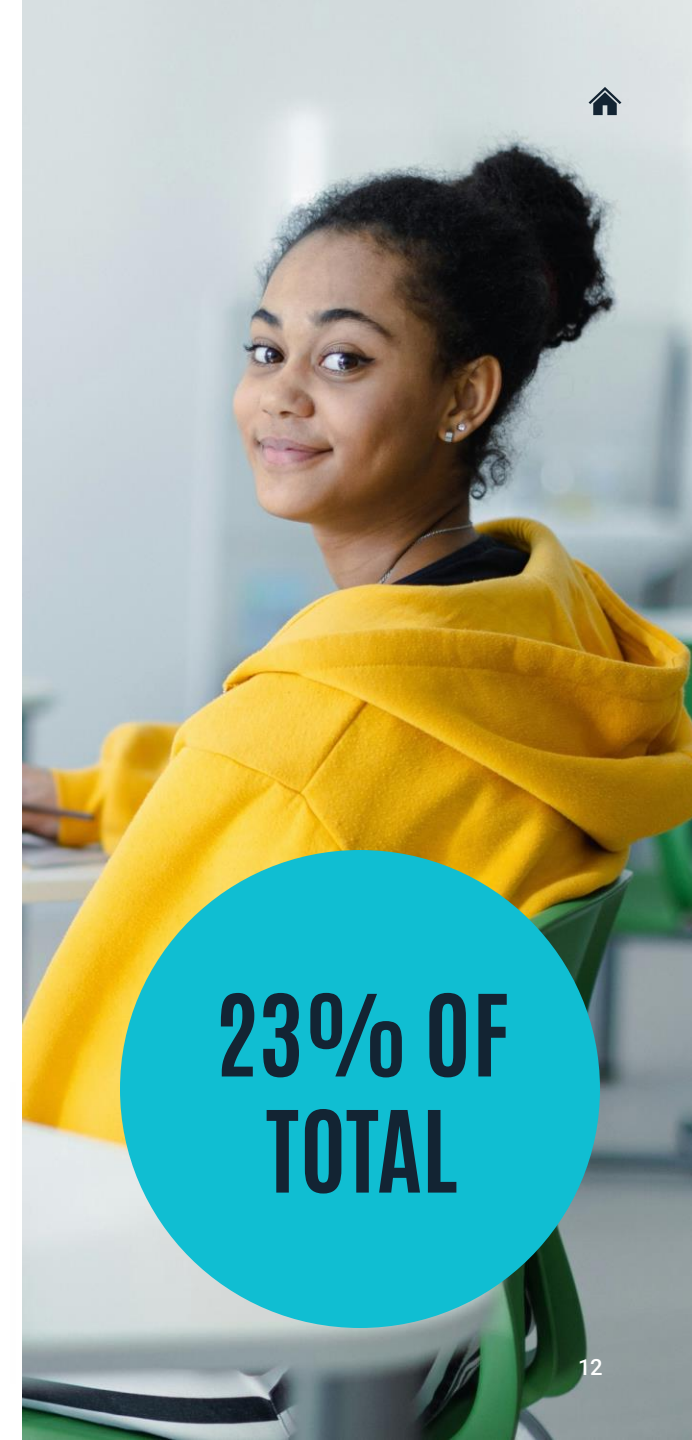
WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Prioritise reassurance, clarity and next steps — make sure you have simple process guides and course-fit messaging ready.
- Tailor the tone of your content to make sure its responsive to the emotional context.
- Make phone support and practical guidance easy to find.

INSIGHT
INTO
ACTION

Help these students by **making your contact routes impossible to miss** — and **focus on reassurance** as a conversion tool.

23% OF
TOTAL



DIRECT

Those who didn't apply before the application deadline.

WHEN THEY RESEARCH

Many Direct students start thinking about and researching Clearing before Results Day.

In fact, because many of these students hadn't considered applying before, they don't display a peak of research activity on or around Results Day (compared to other personas).

PREFERRED CHANNELS

- UCAS and university and college websites.
- Email and phone.
- Local and direct outreach.

WHAT THEY WANT

- Straightforward information.
- A clear route to apply.
- Practical details on support and flexibility.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Be practical — sign-post flexibility, career alignment and local pathways.
- Make sure Clearing entry routes are visible — early — and that they're easy to understand.
- Ensure that your content is tailored to this persona's nuanced motivations, and deliver it with a practical, confidence-building tone.
- Make sure you've got the right media mix — explore local options and direct channels.

INSIGHT
INTO
ACTION

To attract these students, **make entry routes simple and visible**, **lead with outcomes** (not process) and **reduce friction** at every step.

29% OF
TOTAL

MIND CHANGERS

Those with offers who have since decided they would rather study something else, or somewhere else. They use 'Decline My Place' and apply elsewhere during Clearing.

WHEN THEY RESEARCH

Mind Changers tend to start researching their options in August, with activity building throughout the month.

Many then make decisions quickly, on or shortly after Results Day.

PREFERRED CHANNELS

- University or college websites.
- Friends and family.
- Social media, particularly TikTok and Instagram.

WHAT THEY WANT

- To be able to identify a good course 'fit'.
- To get excited about an attractive campus 'feel'.
- Clear, logistical Information that considers location and cost practicalities.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Showcase your course fit, your campus experience and your community credentials clearly, and in formats tailored to social media.
- Use ambassador stories to create authentic, reassuring Clearing content.
- Ensure that Mind-Changer-friendly content is visible across the summer before Results Day.
- Focus on reassurance and practical considerations, as well as more emotional "why this could fit" messaging.

INSIGHT INTO ACTION

To secure the attention of this persona, you need to **be present throughout their 'reconsideration phase'** on a **range of media channels** and **showcase your student experience**.

20% OF
TOTAL

Part of 33%
'Decline My Place'

BETTER THAN EXPECTED

Those with offers, who end up getting better grades than expected — so they enter Clearing using 'Decline My Place', looking for a different university or course.

WHEN THEY RESEARCH

Many, feeling confident and optimistic about their results, do start reconsidering across the summer.

Others, surprised and buoyed by the outcome of their exams, start their Clearing journey on, or just after, Results Day.

PREFERRED CHANNELS

- University and college websites.
- UCAS search.
- Social media and rankings cues.

WHAT THEY WANT

- To see clearly that an institution has a good reputation.
- To see a direct 'line of sight' between a higher education choice and career outcomes.
- To feel an institution will provide academic stretch and stronger prospects.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Ensure that you have high-impact top-level opportunity messages visible early — and highlight them around Results Day, too.
- Focus on reputation-building content, testimonials, and alumni success stories that communicate outcomes, opportunities and academic stretch.
- Pair aspirational cues with practical next-step information — keep messaging optimistic and ambitious. but the experience efficient. Pave the way to a quick, confident conversion.

INSIGHT INTO ACTION

To support these young people to make the best decision for their higher education, **make your opportunities visible ahead of, and on, Results Day** — and **ensure your messaging strikes a balance between ambition and clarity, positivity and practicalities.**

**13% OF
TOTAL**

Part of 33%
'Decline My Place'

NO OFFERS

Those who didn't hold any offers before Level 3 Results day.

WHEN THEY RESEARCH

These students are among the earliest groups to prepare for Clearing: 28% first think about it before *May*.

PREFERRED CHANNELS

- University and college websites.
- UCAS search.
- Admissions conversations.

WHAT THEY WANT

- Reassurance on teaching quality.
- Confidence about graduate outcomes.
- Transparent entry and cost information.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Give No-Offers-friendly content presence and prominence across your platforms from the spring.
- Focus your messaging on academic credibility — lead with teaching quality cues, and create content that shows that your courses have substance.
- Be extremely clear on entry routes, finance information and support services.

INSIGHT INTO ACTION

To secure this persona, you need to **capture them (very) early in the summer** with messaging that **highlights academic credibility** and **makes entry requirements clear**.

14% OF
TOTAL





CLEARING BEHAVIOUR

By Tariff Analytical Categories





WE'VE ANALYSED CLEARING BEHAVIOUR BY THE TARIFF GROUP OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WERE PLACED AT



Jo Richards,
Senior Insight Lead

While we know that Clearing applicants consider universities across multiple tariff groups, and that there is considerable variation in course entry requirements across individual universities, analysing outcomes in this way adds an important additional lens to the five student personas.

This perspective, frequently requested by universities and colleges, helps to build further understanding of students Clearing behaviour, including motivations, decision timelines and preferred engagement channels. While students are not aware of these groups themselves, the analysis shows distinct patterns emerging for Clearing 2025.



INSIGHTS FOR UNIVERSITIES IN THE LOWER TARIFF ANALYTICAL CATEGORY

Breakdown by Clearing Personas

How are students placed at lower tariff universities entering the Clearing journey?

Direct to Clearing

Highest of any tariff

39%

Disappointed on Results Day

Lowest of any tariff

19%

Mind Changers - DMP

Lowest of any tariff

18%

Better than Expected — DMP

Lowest of any tariff

15%

No offers going into Clearing

Highest of any tariff

9%

The lower tariff segment is the largest of the Clearing cohort at 40% of all placed students.

INSIGHTS FOR UNIVERSITIES IN THE LOWER TARIFF ANALYTICAL CATEGORY: MEDIA AND CHANNELS

While researching in the run up to Results Day, those placed at lower tariff universities **appreciate the human touch** – 54% used the UCAS Website, 33% used university and college websites, but **a quarter (25%) spoke directly to university admission staff**. During Clearing, **29% research with Google** – so strong **SEO is essential**, and **search ads are useful**.

These students are **more prepared for the Clearing journey and less reactive**: only 21% made their **first enquiry** to a university or college about Clearing **on Results Day**. **Match their research timeline** and give your Clearing content **presence year-round**.

Many of these students may have made up their minds by Clearing - they are focussed on their search, with 49% **contacting just one university**, 20% contacting two, and only 8% contacting five or more.

Over half of these students don't use social media for Clearing Research. But those that do **use TikTok (22%), Instagram (19%), YouTube (8%) and Facebook (6%)**.

What you say, where you say it, and when really count with these students— as they're the **most likely to have been contacted by universities**.





INSIGHTS FOR UNIVERSITIES IN THE LOWER TARIFF ANALYTICAL CATEGORY: MESSAGING & EXPERIENCE

Talk about the support you offer.

These students are looking for **evidence of academic guidance** (including the availability of a foundation year), **mental health provisions**, and **sensitivity to personal circumstances**.

Grab the attention of these students by being pragmatic. 39% claim **that information on available courses stands out**. 23% said the same for **contact information**. **Explaining the Clearing process** (21%) and **showing the university location** (19%) is also important. It's not all admin, though — **showcasing what life is like at your institution** could also get you noticed (29%).

This group are **concerned with money**. More than other categories, they want clarity on **likely graduate earning potential** (82%), **tuition fees** (66%) and **incentives like bursaries** (60%). Make sure you **address these factors**, with content on available **financial support, travel logistics, cost of living** and **remote working options**.

Unsurprisingly — due to their focussed approach of contacting a more limited number of universities — **69% of these students receive just one offer**.



INSIGHTS FOR UNIVERSITIES IN THE MEDIUM TARIFF ANALYTICAL CATEGORY

Breakdown by Clearing Personas.

How are students placed at medium tariff universities entering the Clearing journey?

Direct to Clearing

27%

Disappointed on Results Day

25%

Better than Expected — DMP

16%

Mind Changers - DMP

24%

No offers going into Clearing

8%

Students placed at medium tariff universities are the second largest segment (38% of all placed in Clearing).

INSIGHTS FOR UNIVERSITIES IN THE MEDIUM TARIFF ANALYTICAL CATEGORY: MEDIA AND CHANNELS

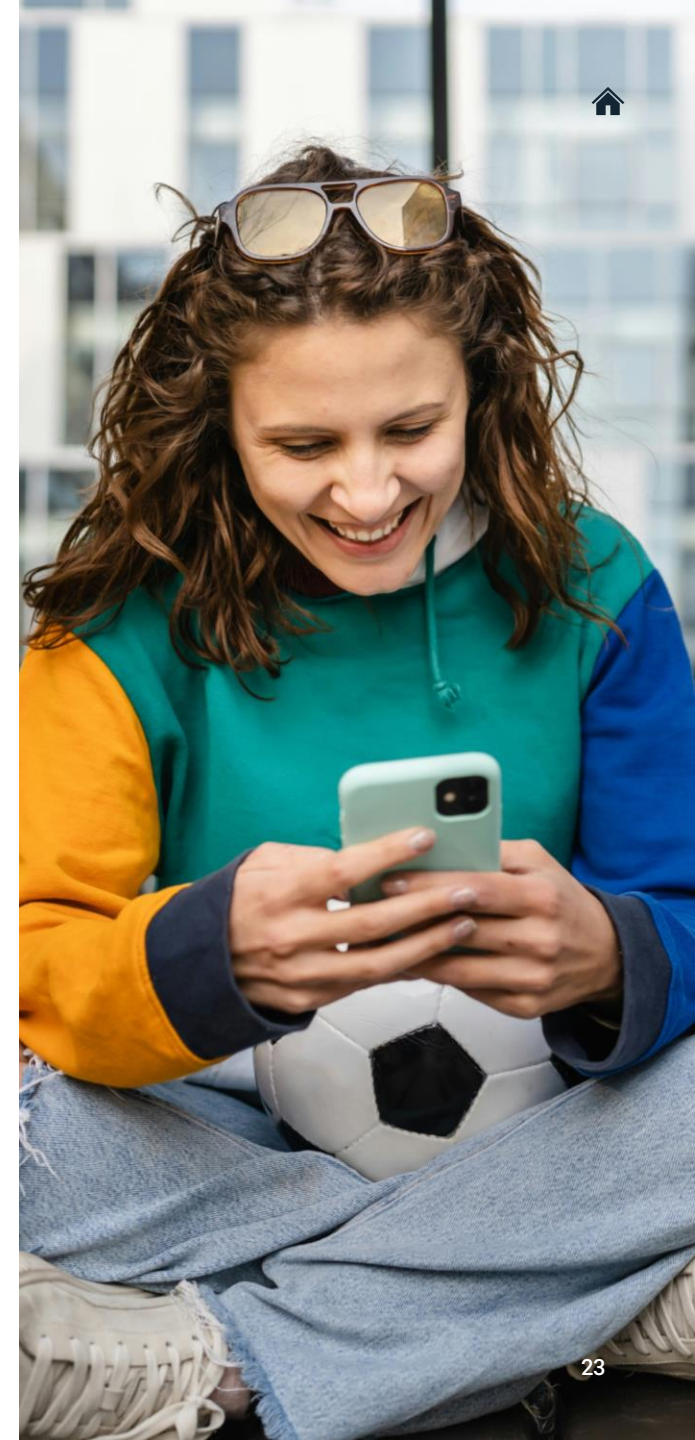
These students appear to **prepare for Clearing earlier, and are relatively less reactive on Results Day** — 30% made their **first enquiry** to a university or college about Clearing then. Make sure you have suitable content for them **visible across the summer**, and prominent when they find out about their grades.

In the run up to Results Day, **54% use the UCAS website, and 38% use university and college websites**. Make sure your experience is optimised on these channels — **both are used heavily during Clearing, too** (42% university and college websites, 37% UCAS search tool).

Be sure to **connect with these students as early as possible**. By the time Clearing starts, many are focussed — **44% contact just one university or college**.

Those placed at medium tariff universities **are the most likely to use social media for Clearing research**. If you're looking to reach them, **be sure to have a presence on TikTok** (26% use it) and **Instagram** (19%). YouTube is less popular (8%).

There's an obvious **outreach opportunity**: while just over a third were contacted by two or more universities during the Clearing process (37%), another third (35%) **didn't hear from any university**.





INSIGHTS FOR UNIVERSITIES IN THE **MEDIUM TARIFF** ANALYTICAL CATEGORY MESSAGING & EXPERIENCE

These students can be engaged by **giving them a good sense of what it's like to study with you**. 37% say that it's information on **courses available** that stands out, 29% **say content on university life**, and 25% say **your awards and rankings**.

These students are **concerned with academic support** (83% ranked this a top consideration factor), **location** in the town or city (77%) and the **cost of living** (74%). You can **prioritise these topics in your content**, and **demote less appealing subjects** like courses being challenging (only 56% thought this was important), or details on sports facilities (40%).

They want you to communicate clearly whether **the course they're interested in is offered** (95%), the **quality of your staff / teaching** (92%), the **quality of your teaching facilities** (91%), the **range of modules** being covered on a course (83%) and their **chance of being accepted based on their grades** (85%).

They'll also appreciate you making the Clearing journey frictionless and positive with **prominent contact info** (23%), **explanations of the process** (20%) and **reassurance** from past Clearing students (18%).



INSIGHTS FOR UNIVERSITIES IN THE **HIGH TARIFF** ANALYTICAL CATEGORY

Breakdown by Clearing Personas.

How are students placed at high tariff universities entering the Clearing journey?

Disappointed on Results Day

Highest of any tariff

27%

Mind Changers — DMP

Highest of any tariff

27%

Better than Expected — DMP

Highest of any tariff

24%

Direct to Clearing

Lowest of any tariff

15%

No offers going into Clearing

7%

Lowest of any tariff

Students placed at high tariff universities are the smallest segment of the Clearing cohort (21%).

INSIGHTS FOR UNIVERSITIES IN THE HIGH TARIFF ANALYTICAL CATEGORY: MEDIA AND CHANNELS

35% made their **first enquiry** to a university or college about Clearing on Results Day (the most likely tariff group to do so).

Be ready to attract them on, before, and after this key moment with **clear, concise content**.

Focus efforts on UCAS services and your website. They use them more than any other tariff .

57% use the UCAS website for research in the run up to Results Day (41% during Clearing) and 47% use university websites (rising to 48% during Clearing).

62% contact multiple institutions (20% contacted five or more) - meaning first-choice consideration cannot be assumed.

Just saying hello could make a big difference: these students are the least likely to have been contacted by a university (41% receive no communication during Clearing).

Social media activity **must be tailored and targeted**. Most of these students (63%) **don't use it for Clearing research**, but those that do turn to **Tik Tok (24%) and Instagram (16%)**. **Only 7% use YouTube**.





INSIGHTS FOR UNIVERSITIES IN THE **HIGH TARIFF** ANALYTICAL CATEGORY: MESSAGING & EXPERIENCE

Those placed at high tariff universities are the most likely to say they **didn't see or couldn't remember any messaging from universities** (32%). But you *can* get their attention **with aspirational messages** — including **ranking, awards and statistics** (31% said this “stood out”), the **courses that are available** (38%), and **university life** (26%). Practicalities are key too, including **Clearing contact information** (23%) and **explanations of the process** (17%).

Be specific and give them the **information that they want: graduates' prospects** (85% said this was important when choosing a clearing place), the **range of modules** covered by the course (85%), the university **league table position** (81%), the availability of **university accommodation** (75%) and **historical entry grades** (53%).

Lifestyle factors are also key for these students — be sure to show consideration for **academic support** (78% rated this important) and **the cost of living** (69%). **If your institution is in a town or city**, shout about it — 77% feel location is an important factor when choosing where to study.



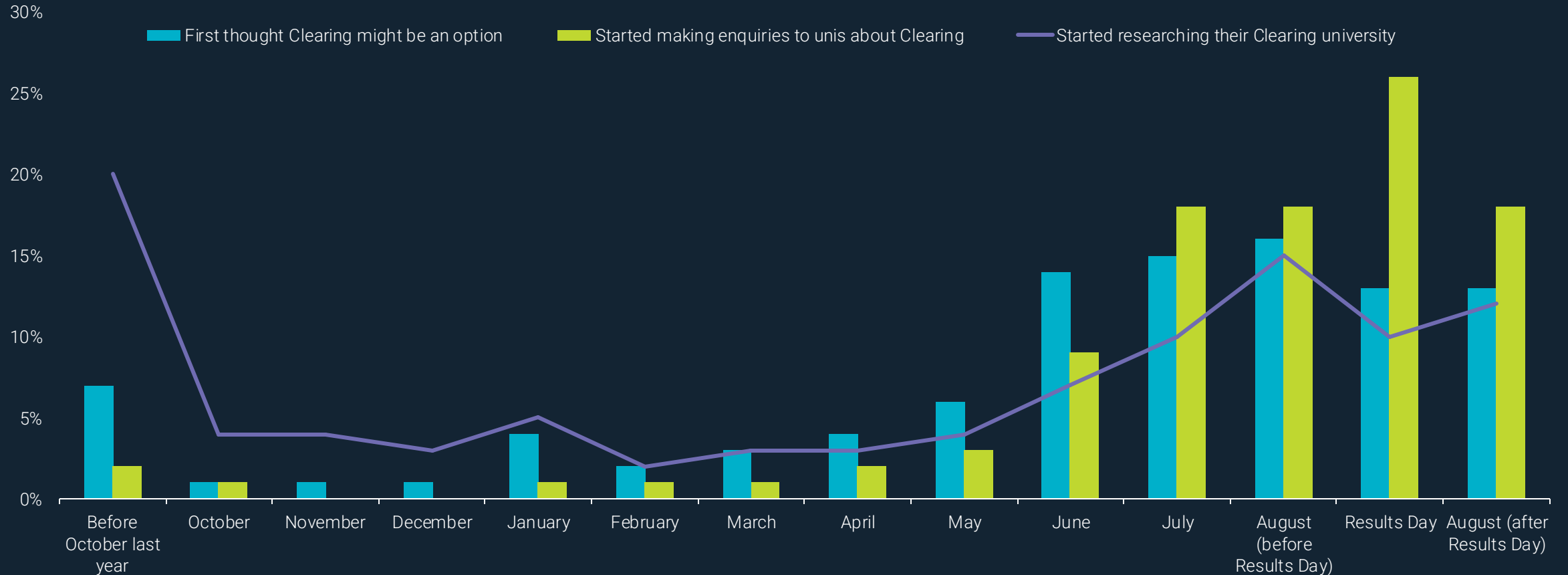


EVIDENCE DEEP-DIVE: CLEARING RESEARCH

It starts early — and is more focussed than ever.



STUDENTS PREPARE – AND TAKE ACTION – MONTHS IN ADVANCE



Work to *their* timeline and treat Clearing as a year-round research journey.

Q. When did you first think Clearing might be an option for your route to university or college? No. respondents: 4,681

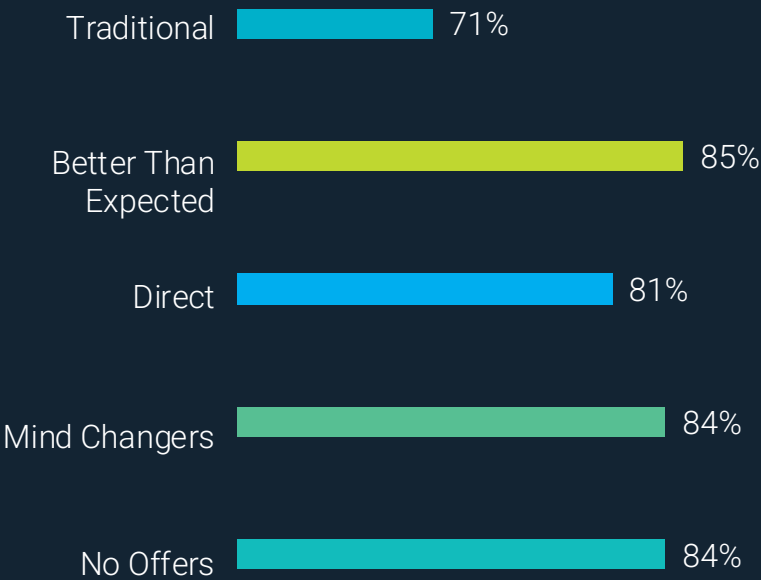
Q. When did you first start making enquiries to universities or colleges about Clearing (e.g. joined a Clearing email list, signed up for Clearing notifications, phoned a Clearing hotline etc.) No. respondents: 4,644

Q. When did you start researching the university or college you were placed at through Clearing? No. respondents: 4,714

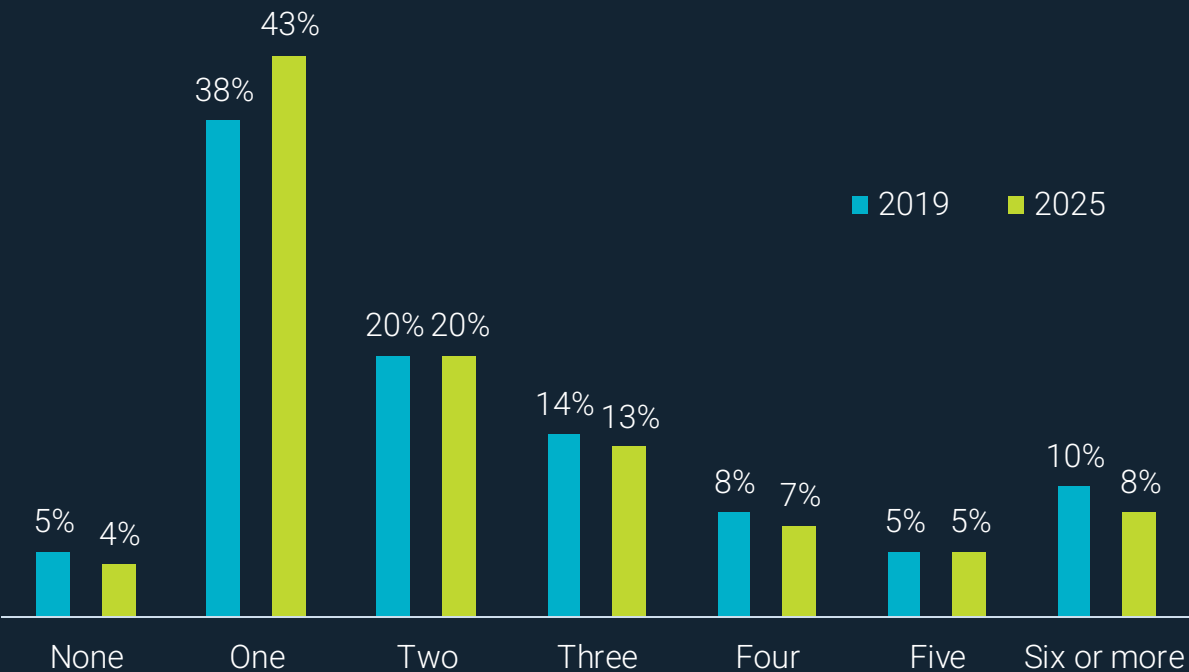
STUDENT RESEARCH IS DELIBERATE AND HIGHLY SELECTIVE



% Who knew which unis they would contact by clearing persona



Number of universities or colleges contacted in clearing



Act early, clearly, so you're who they want to speak to – many contact only one institution!

Q: Please tell us whether or not the following statement describes how you used Clearing? I had already researched available places beforehand and knew which universities or colleges I wanted to contact. No. respondents: 4,702

Q: How many universities or colleges...? did you contact about courses in Clearing. No. respondents: 2025 4,687

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

"I had my heart set on a particular course and the lady on the clearing help line was extremely helpful and within 30 minutes I had a confirmed place at my dream uni on my dream course."



EVIDENCE DEEP-DIVE: CLEARING RESEARCH TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

01

Make Clearing content visible early, with explainer guides, dates, and transparent process information all available from spring onwards.



02

Stay present with live availability, fresh content, and clear, accessible contact options into late August and early September. Make sure students can get in touch easily when they're ready to act.

03

Be ready for highly selective students. Ensure your Clearing pages, hotlines, and live chat channels are fast, obvious, and staffed from day one.

04

Make every connection count and optimise for fewer, higher-value touchpoints. Treat every interaction – website, UCAS listing, hotline, chatbot, and especially conversations with admissions teams – as a conversion moment. Aim for accuracy, speed, and transparency.

05

Tailor your experience and be clear on when it's most competitive. While 43% of students will talk to just one institution, the Traditional persona – and those placed at high tariff universities – are more likely to contact several.



EVIDENCE DEEP-DIVE: DECISION MAKING

Core choice drivers haven't changed —
students look for quality and support to feel confident.





CLEARING DOESN'T MEAN 'SETTLING' — IT'S ABOUT THE RIGHT FIT

You must communicate quality, not just availability.

Consistent with previous years, **students want quality** — great teaching, facilities, a range of modules, good reviews, academic support and good outcomes — from their Clearing choice.

The **No Offers persona** are perhaps the most **particular**, with higher proportions finding many of the top ten factors very important in their decision.

Q: How important were the following factors when choosing your place in Clearing?
Net Very important and important. No. respondents: 4,683

95%

The university offering my desired course

92%

The quality of staff/teaching

91%

The quality of the teaching facilities

86%

My chance of being accepted based on my grades

84%

The range of modules covered by the course

83%

Good student reviews

83%

Academic support available

82%

Graduate prospects

81%

Likely earning potential after graduation

77%

The location in the town or city

STUDENTS ARE STILL FOCUSSED ON FINANCIAL FACTORS



73%

COST OF LIVING AT THE UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE

Inc. 34% very important

England: 73%

NI: 82%

Scotland: 74%

Wales: 80%

71%

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Inc. 36% very important

England: 72%

NI: 86%

Scotland: 81%

Wales: 83%

69%

COST OF TRAVELLING BETWEEN HOME & UNI

Inc. 34% very important

England: 70%

NI: 71%

Scotland: 66%

Wales: 69%

Make sure your content considers cost practicalities.

Q: How important were the following lifestyle factors when choosing your place in Clearing? Net Very important and important No. respondents: 4,696

ACADEMIC AND WELLBEING SUPPORT IS EXPECTED



83%

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Inc. 41% very important

England: 83%

NI: 85%

Scotland: 88%

Wales: 90%

62%

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT

Inc. 30% very important

England: 61%

NI: 63%

Scotland: 67%

Wales: 70%

46%

SUPPORT FOR OTHER PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Inc. 20% very important

England: 45%

NI: 39%

Scotland: 45%

Wales: 47%

Don't neglect this important layer of reassurance.

Q: How important were the following lifestyle factors when choosing your place in Clearing? Net Very important and important No. respondents: 4,696

THERE ARE STILL SOME 'INFORMATION GAPS'

Giving you an opportunity to increase confidence with clarity.



150%

said there was information or support they wanted from universities while searching for a place in Clearing which they didn't get.

-2pp decrease vs 2024 ▼

▼▲ Denotes significant change vs. 2024



ACCOMMODATION

What's available, what types, and what's the application process?

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

What exactly are they — including non-standard qualifications and work experience?

COURSE DETAILS

What are the modules, assessment methods, locations, and graduate outcomes?

PRACTICAL LOGISTICS (PARTICULARLY FOR MATURE STUDENTS)

Where are the details on timetables, commuting, and parking?

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

What funding options are there? What support is available?

PROCESS TRANSPARENCY

What are the timelines and the confirmation expectations?

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

"I would have liked more information regarding accommodation... After I received an offer, it was still very complicated to understand how it worked... It would have been helpful to be given more details when searching for a place in Clearing."



EVIDENCE DEEP-DIVE: DECISION-MAKING TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

01

Reduce uncertainty at every step and make sure course information is rich and visible. Use punchy proof points to build confidence quickly — and talk about courses in terms of their future value, not just the entry requirements.



02

Show the reality of studying with you. Remember that many students haven't visited an open day or pre-applicant day at their Clearing university or college. Provide virtual tours, realistic day-in-the-life content, and accommodation explainers to close the "I don't know what it's like" gap.

03

Treat availability as a visibility tool. It's still a priority. But pair every availability message with a value message, and make sure you deliver high-quality course content at the point of search.

04

Keep your support offer obvious. While student decisions are primarily based on course quality, teaching experience and prospects, their concern for financial, mental, social and academic wellbeing could be an important swaying factor.

05

Build clarity into every stage of your communications. It's essential to be clear during Clearing. Students want course availability, entry routes, simple process walk-throughs, and fast reassurance. Remove friction and minimise clicks.



EVIDENCE DEEP-DIVE: MESSAGING

Practical communications have the most cut-through.





STUDENTS SEEK INFORMATION IN ADVANCE

79%

How the Clearing process works.

58%

When Clearing opens.

51%

Course availability.

35%

Courses at the same uni as my firm choice, but with lower entry requirements.

35%

Universities and colleges with lower entry requirements than my firm choice.

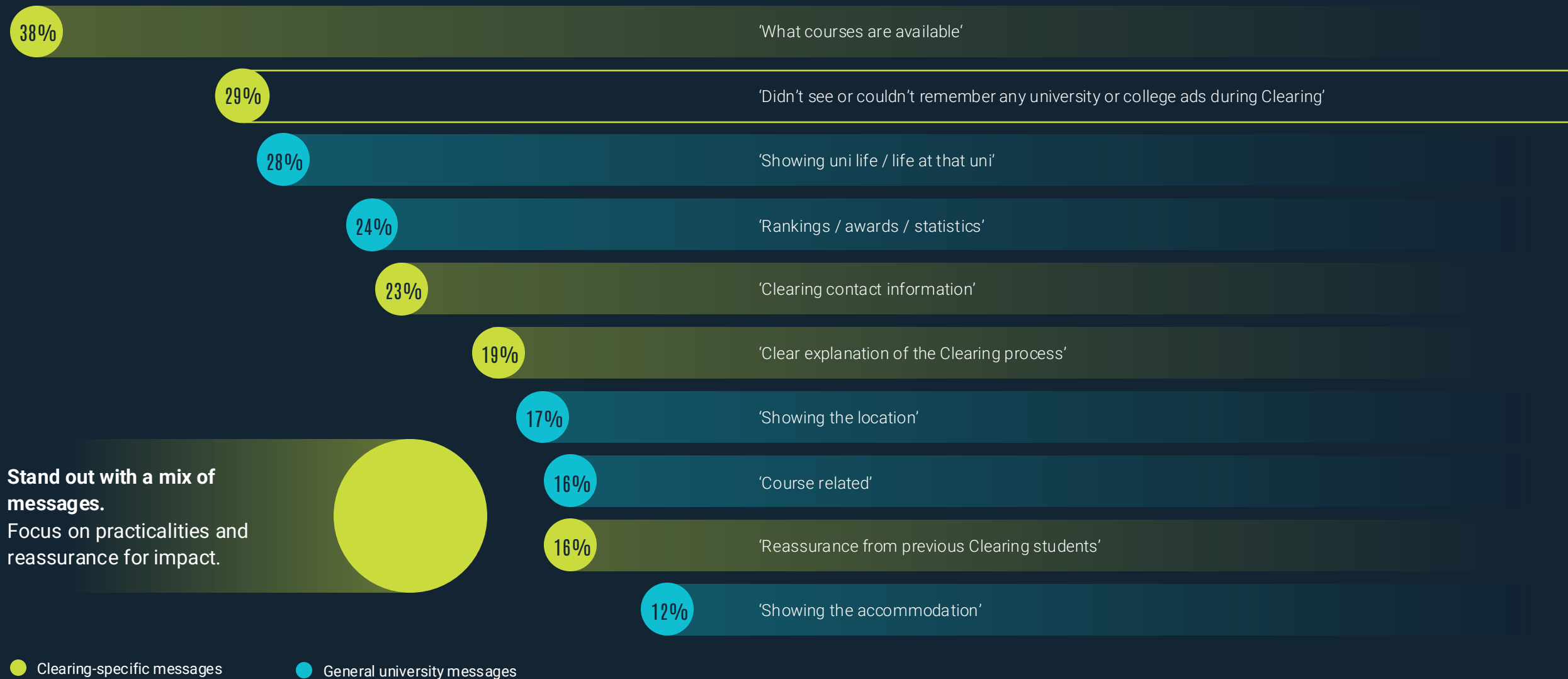
21%

Information about universities and colleges offering a specific course.



Clearing clarity drives confidence before Results Day. Explain the process (When? How?) and the availability of courses.

WHAT STUDENTS SAID STOOD OUT TO THEM





EVIDENCE DEEP-DIVE: MESSAGING TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

01

Students continue to notice a mix of Clearing-specific and general university or college messaging. Keep availability, contact info, and ‘what’s possible here’ front and centre — and maintain visibility before and after Results Day.

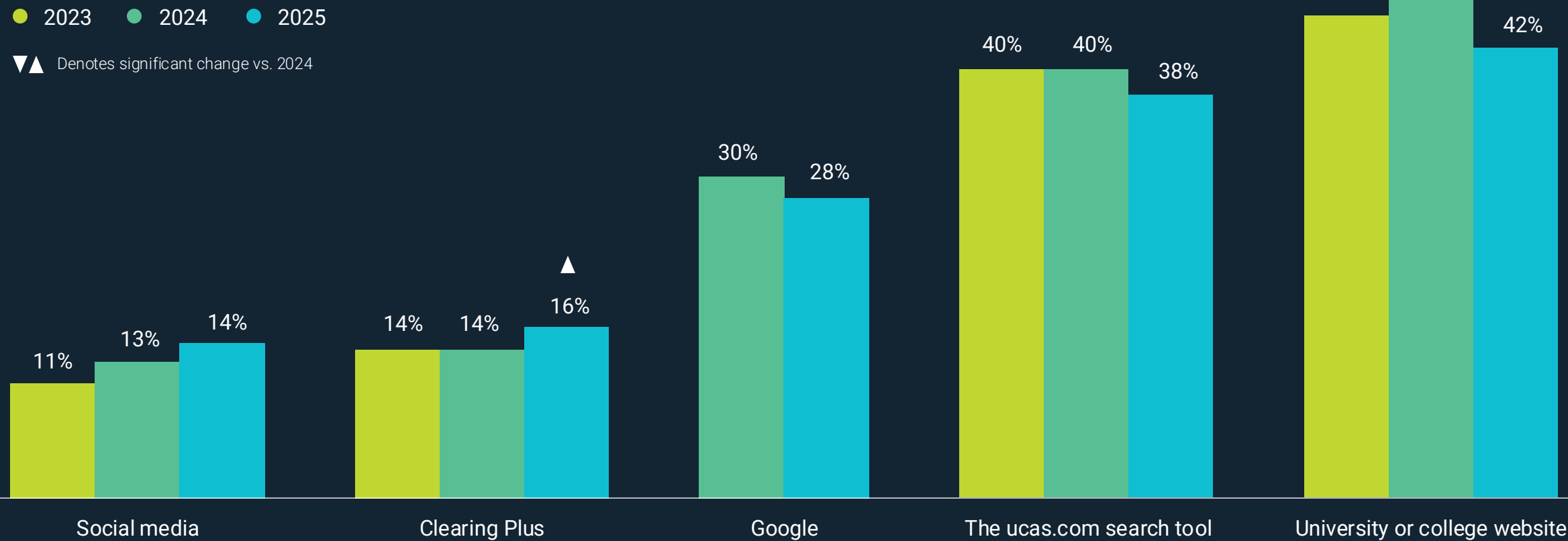


EVIDENCE DEEP-DIVE: CHANNEL MIX

Optimising inbound channels is vital –
but there's a missed outreach opportunity.



TRUSTED, DIRECT SOURCES OF INFORMATION ARE MOST VISITED



Be visible and engaging where students want you to be.

Q: When you were looking for a place in Clearing, where did you search for places? Please select all that apply. No. respondents: 4,684

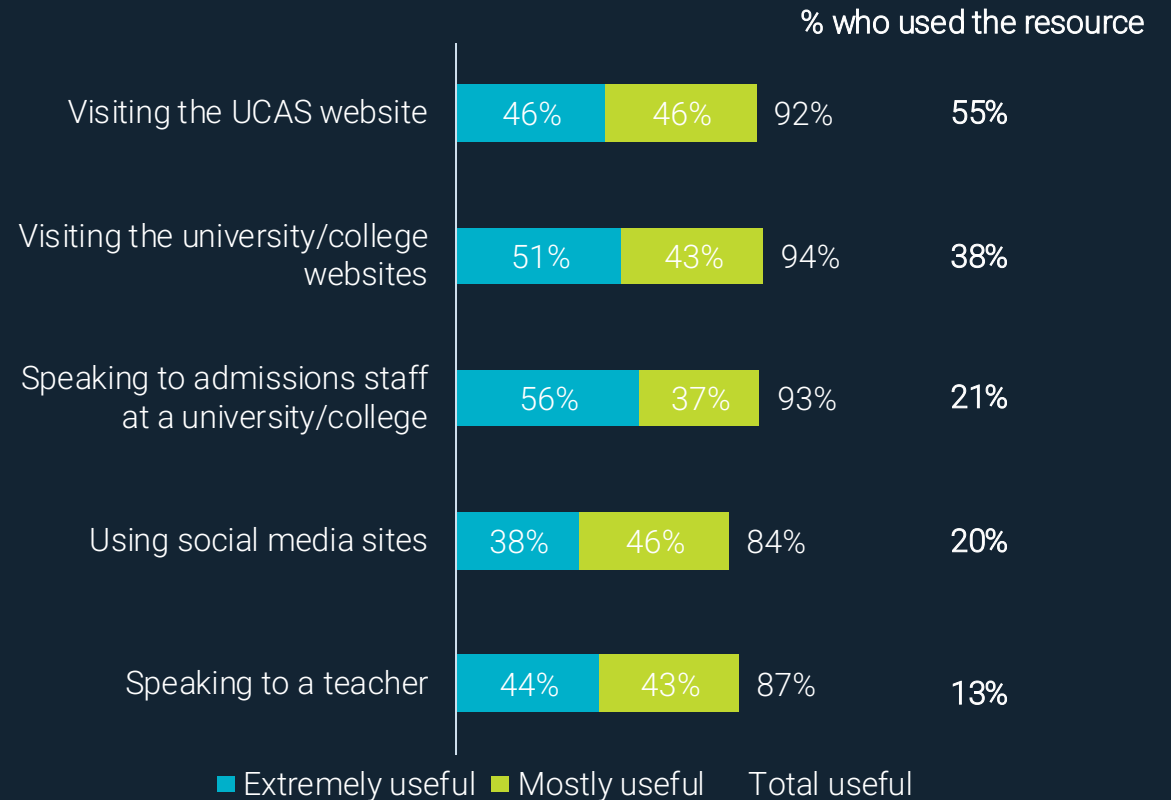
THESE DIRECT, TRUSTED SOURCES ARE ALSO SEEN AS THE MOST USEFUL

Prepare your staff, optimise your website, and work with partners students value.

Students consistently turn to a **small set of trusted, direct sources when researching Clearing**, particularly **university or college websites** and the **UCAS website** (55% visit it in the run up to Results day to research Clearing)

Admissions staff could be the 'secret sauce' of conversion pre-Results Day. Currently, only one in five students speak to them – but of those who do, **56%** find the conversation **extremely useful** (rising to **61%** among the Direct persona, and **60%** among the No Offers persona).

Usefulness of pre results day info sources used.



Q: How useful did you find the information from. No. respondents: 3,917 who used the resource



BUT THERE'S AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MORE ENGAGEMENT

Marketing could fill an 'outreach gap'.

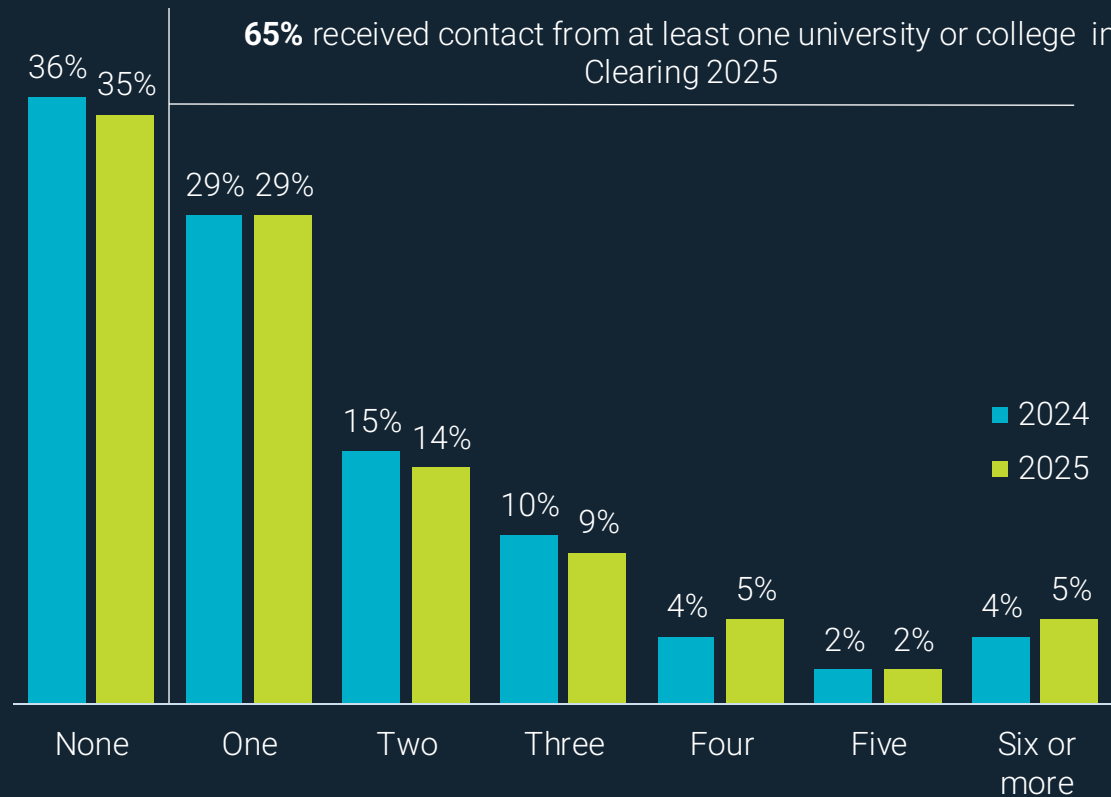
More than a third of Clearing respondents weren't contacted by any universities during Clearing.

This number rose to 41% of students placed at high-tariff universities.

There was also regional variation, with 41% of Scottish respondents receiving no contact.



Number of universities who contacted them in clearing.



Q: How many universities or colleges...? contacted you about courses in Clearing. No. respondents: 2025 4,687. 2024 5,920.

EVIDENCE DEEP-DIVE: MESSAGING

INSIGHT INTO ACTION

Prepare your admissions staff, website, social media and UCAS services (such as Clearing Plus) for in-bound, researching students. But remember to use other channels to sign-post students to these valued resources.





RE-CAP & NEXT STEPS

Evolving your Clearing strategy with UCAS Media:
a trusted partner for long-term outcomes.





FOR STUDENTS IN 2026, CLEARING IS A CHOICE, NOT A COMPROMISE

Stand out by making your experience **positive, student-centred** and **memorable**.

Treat Clearing as a **year-round journey**, with the **timing and tone** of your messages — and your **channel mix** — **tailored carefully**.

Target the students you want **through the lens of *both* personas and tariffs**, and **build a bespoke experience** that's **clear, frictionless and confidence-building** at every stage.



TOGETHER, WE CAN PROVIDE TIMELY, TARGETED INFORMATION WHEN AND WHERE STUDENTS NEED IT MOST — ENSURING YOUR INSTITUTION GETS NOTICED AND STAYS RELEVANT WITH AN ENGAGING, EFFICIENT CLEARING EXPERIENCE.

We're here to help:

Visit the [Clearing Connection webpage](#)

Speak to your Customer Manager or Customer Success Director

Email educationservices@ucas.ac.uk

THE CLEARING CONNECTION

Real choices. Real signals. Real outcomes.